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Bartók's *Romanian Christmas Carols*: Changes from the Folk Sources and Their Significance

INGRID ARAUCO

This study attempts to define the criteria underlying Bartók's compositional choices in a single work: the *Romanian Christmas Carols* of 1915 for piano solo. I shall examine the often slight but telling changes made in the melodies from their original folksong sources to Bartók's final arrangement. In so doing, I hope to reveal certain patterns of choice which reflect the nature of the composer's aesthetic.

Bartók's folksong arrangements, and those of the carols in particular, lend themselves to a study of compositional choice for several reasons. First, the variable nature of folk tunes requires the composer to select "definitive" versions from an often large number of different texts. Bartók's selections tell us much about the artistic values involved in his approach to folk music. Indeed, it quickly will be evident that in Bartók's case, the study of compositional choice is precisely the question of the relationship of folk to art music. Second, the carol arrangements exemplify the simplest method in Bartók's treatment of a folk melody: the "mounting of a jewel."¹ Here, the melody stands out clearly from its accompaniment, and is thus far easier to compare with its sources than if it was more fully integrated into the texture. Third,

these pieces mark the first time Bartók included the “original” tunes—nearly identical to the versions appearing in the arrangement—as a preface to the printed score. While Bartók was obviously intent on proving the art-music potential of “raw” folk material to his audience, he did not indicate that changes in the tunes had previously been made. This omission, contrasted to the detail with which he provides other information, such as texts and village of collection, makes the question of Bartók’s precise attitude toward folksong all the more intriguing—and worth clarifying.

To properly appreciate and put into perspective the changes we are about to examine, however, let us first recall some things about Bartók’s artistic milieu which would have influenced his compositional choices. Above all, there were years of conservatory training as a pianist and composer, steeped in the German tradition. Bartók’s interest in composition does not date from his encounter with Hungarian folk music. Rather, he was an experienced and accomplished composer who first went out into the field in search of new material to supplement and reinvigorate the Romantic heritage he felt was no longer capable of spurring his artistic growth. German compositional values served as a basis for comparison as he listened to the new folk music and influenced the way he presented it in his works.

Maintaining a link between tradition, as represented by the conventions of German art music, and the innovation of the native folk product was also crucial to Bartók’s didactic purposes. He knew well that the urban Hungarian audience for whom his work was intended would not accept the offering of its native soil unless it conformed to German standards of taste. Indeed, many of folk music’s most characteristic features—such as shifting meters, modal scalar patterning, and often elaborate ornamentation—would themselves make it difficult if not impossible for audiences to comprehend fully this music in terms of the basic Western repertory they knew. Finally, Bartók’s nationalistically-inspired desire to promulgate the “true” Hungarian music and his love for the great German-dominated tradition of art music were fused in his ambition (stated with Kodály as early as 1906) to bring folk song into the concert hall.

All these factors probably influenced the choices and changes Bartók made in preparing the carols for arrangement. However, a composer’s decisions cannot ever be explained exhaustively or with absolute certainty. Thus, this study will not explain Bartók’s motivations in making changes, though I will suggest motivations that seem implied most strongly by the effect of the changes on specific tunes. My primary purpose is simply to describe in purely musical terms these changes and to discuss their implications for his work.

Sources and Chronology

All the carols Bartók chose to arrange were collected in Transylvania (then Hungarian territory inhabited by Romanians) between 1910 and 1914. When the outbreak of World War I threatened to curtail his travels, Bartók turned to the composition of a series of pieces based on material he had already amassed. Works written during the so-called "Romanian year" of 1915 include the *Sonatina*, the popular *Romanian Folk Dances*, and the carol arrangements. The latter work, comprising two sets of ten pieces each, was published by Universal Edition (Vienna) in 1918.

Before discussing the sources for each melody, it might be well to consider how these carols, or *Colinde*, were originally performed. The custom of Colinda singing is described by the editor in the preface to the fourth volume of Bartók's Romanian folk music collection as follows:

Several weeks before Christmas the Colinda singers form into groups of eight to ten young men and women, . . . and carols are selected for 'study' under the supervision of each group leader. On Christmas Eve the groups set out on a caroling tour of the village; they stop in front of each house to inquire whether the host will receive them, and—if they gain admittance—they perform four or five carols. . . . At the end of the performance the carolers receive gifts and then move on to another house.²

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A peculiarity of performance in certain counties—and one which Bartók did not try to adapt in his arrangement—is the practice of "change singing," in which the two choruses of a divided group enter antiphonally, overlapping the end of one stanza with the beginning of the next. Bartók notes this practice gives the listener

. . . the impression of eager haste on the part of the performers: as if (they) . . . cannot, for sheer impatience, await the end of the stanza; indeed, that they must start the new stanza during the closing portion of the preceding one in order to reach the end of the—usually quite long—Colinda text and thus be able to visit more houses.³

Characteristically, verse structure is articulated by one or two short, exclamatory text refrains. These usually allude to religious or pastoral

² From the Foreword by Benjamin Suchoff to B. Bartók, *Rumanian Folk Music*, Vol. IV: *Carols and Christmas Songs (Colinde)*, ed. B. Suchoff (The Hague, 1975), pp. xxxi–xxxii. (The collection is hereafter referred to as *RFM* IV.) This description of the Colinda custom paraphrases a longer discussion by Bartók in his article "Rumanian Folk Music" (1931) in *Essays*, pp. 120–21.

³ From Bartók's own Introduction to Part One in *RFM* IV, p. 25.

subjects, as for example, "Domnului Doamne!" (To the Almighty!) or "Hoi l'er flori d'e mar!" (Hoy, sing apple blooms!). The linguistic refrain is an integral part of the tune; without the words it is often difficult to tell where the musical refrain begins. This contrasts with the compartmental nature of Western verse-and-refrain structures (those of ballads and many art songs, carols, and hymns, for example), whose refrains tend to be longer than the one to three measures of the typical Colinda. These compact refrains reflect the shortness of the tunes themselves—a maximum of ten to twelve (unrepeated) bars in common time. A single refrain is most likely to occur in the center of a melody, separating two similar phrases (as in Examples 1 and 2), whereas two refrains, not always alike, usually complete each of the two large phrases that comprise many of the tunes (Examples 3, 6) and have a more cadential quality.

In the original carol, the text refrains serve an articulative function because the melodies are often highly ornate and susceptible to change with every performance. The repeated phrase or phrases of text provide stable points of reference through the piece, musically as well as textually. Since Bartók's arrangement for piano solo excludes the text, an important, predictable guide for the listener is thus lost. Throughout this study I will question to what extent Bartók's melodic changes compensate for the elimination of the refrain as a textual entity and a structural marker.

Only two types of melodies in Bartók's collection omit refrains: (1) some carols of the *Cântec de stea* type, which the composer speculated were altered folk borrowings from popular art music; and (2) certain incomplete tunes, certain parts of which had been eliminated gradually in performance. Bartók included both kinds of melodies in his arrangement, and, as we shall see later, exploited their special properties. (Note, however, that this study does not deal with Bartók's choice of which twenty pieces to arrange from his entire collection. Instead, we begin with these choices already made so as to focus on those features in the tunes that Bartók felt needed to be altered in order for him to fulfill his artistic intentions.⁴)

Let us now turn to the sources for the work. Each melody appears in four versions, which I shall discuss in the following order: (1) the transcription made from the phonograph cylinder (hereafter, A or tran-

⁴ There is also a problem involved with trying to ascertain why Bartók may have selected twenty melodies in particular from the 454 in his collection: while it seems reasonable to speculate that many of the tunes would have been excluded from consideration because they were too melodically or rhythmically intricate, many others seem to have been passed over simply as a matter of personal preference for the tunes which were eventually chosen. This situation limits the conclusions one can draw regarding Bartók's criteria for selection. Nevertheless, a study of this kind could well be fruitful, especially in light of and as an addition to evidence the present essay provides.

scription), (2) the entry in Bartók's field notebook (hereafter, [B] or notebook), (3) the preface to the printed score (hereafter, [C] or preface version), and (4) the arrangement itself ([D]). This sequence reflects the process of change in the melodies leading from the original folk performance to Bartók's completed composition.

[A]: The transcription

Most faithful to the original performances are the transcriptions from the recordings Bartók made on location. Years were spent perfecting these transcriptions to include ever-finer shades of detail in ornamentation, tempo, and pitch inflection. The largest group of melodies, which contains all but one of the carols used in Bartók's arrangements, was not published until 1935, with subsequent revisions incorporated only in the Suchoff edition of 1975.⁵ It is this last volume that I have used as a source, in spite of the chronological problem it presents. Though we cannot be sure what state his transcriptions were in at the time of composition in 1915, Bartók did have access to his recordings, and could have listened to them had he sought to reproduce precisely a particular melody. Furthermore, he was certainly aware of the often profuse melodic embellishment and rhythmic elasticity characteristic of the tunes, and could have chosen to incorporate these traits in his arrangement.

The carols in the printed collection generally exist in two variant forms: in a broad sense, as melodies which are notated and labelled separately, but which are grouped together under one number heading because they share a similar structure,⁶ and more narrowly (and more importantly for this study) as individual stanza variants, which indicate pitch and rhythmic fluctuations within the performance of a single tune. In the following musical examples, I have selected the basic form of the melody that is closest to the final arrangement, and below this line indi-

⁵ The Suchoff edition (fully cited in footnote 2) is based on the collection *Melodien der rumänischen Colinde (Weihnachtslieder)*, published by Universal Edition (Vienna) in 1935. The transcriptions of the carols Bartók used in his composition appear unchanged in the later volume. The transcription of the fifth carol in the first set of pieces (Example 9) was first published in the collection *Volksmusik der Rumänen von Maramureş* by Drei Masken Verlag (Munich) in 1923. It is found, also unchanged, in *Rumanian Folk Music*, Vol. V: *Maramureş County*, ed. B. Suchoff, p. 53. (This collection is hereafter referred to as *RFM V*.)

⁶ Bartók explains his method of classifying the melodies in *RFM IV*, pp. 10–29. Briefly, the tunes were first divided into three classes according to the number of syllables per text line. These classes were further divided on the basis of the number, syllable count, rhythm and final pitch level of the melody lines (defined by Bartók on p. 11 as “that portion of a melody falling upon a text line”). The melody variants I refer to here are the result of such subgroupings, and are indicated in the collection and in my examples by lower-case letters following the particular melody number (e.g., 10a, 102j, etc.).

cated stanza variants where they corroborate a later change. Thus, the extent of change seen in each carol from versions [A] to [D] will be the minimum possible. This allows us to focus on those changes Bartók must have made totally on his own; that is, without having followed any precedent in the original performance. Of course, the very choice of a note or rhythm as it appeared in a later stanza instead of in the first stanza (the version provided as the main melody line in all the musical examples) will itself tell of Bartók's compositional criteria.

[B]: The notebook entry

Recording was a procedure complementary to on-the-spot notation of melodies in the field. Bartók would first take down a melody, which if judged suitable, was performed again for the machine. The reasons for doing this instead of relying exclusively on the phonograph are explained by the composer:

It might happen that the singer will consistently distort certain details during the recording. In that case we can then refer to the more correct . . . notated form as definitively dictated prior to the recording. Moreover, only on-the-spot notation, no matter how defective, can give an adequately clear perspective of what has been collected. This perspective is a very important factor in the further acquisition of variants. . . . Our written data will serve as a check whether other, later variants show enough divergence to warrant their being collected.⁷

My second source, then, is the notebook entry for each carol, as compiled by Vera Lampert.⁸ This source is more important to our study than the transcriptions because, as mentioned earlier, we cannot know if Bartók had completed them before beginning his arrangement. The notebook entries, however, were surely referred to. Since these generally contain far less embellishment than the polished transcriptions, they often help clarify the rhythmic and melodic patterning of the tunes.

⁷ B. Bartók, "Why and How Do We Collect Folk Music?" (1936), in *Essays*, p. 19. And Zoltán Kodály states in *RFM* V, Appendix I (a reprint of an article that originally appeared in 1923): "The use of the phonograph has been of great help in observing the fine details. Yet, the collector himself must . . . note the words and melodies so that he should be able to control the machine's flaws."

⁸ V. Lampert, "Quellenkatalog der Volksliedbearbeitung von Bartók. Ungarische, slowakische, rumänische, ruthenische, serbische und arabische Volkslieder und Tänze," *Documenta Bartókiana*, ed. L. Somfai, Vol. 6 (Budapest, 1981), pp. 82–89. Lampert also selects the notebook entry which most closely conforms to the melody as it appears in the final arrangement.

☐: The preface version

The carols in their notebook version served as a basis both for more refined transcriptions (accomplished with the aid of the phonograph; eventually to become ☐) and for compositional elaboration. The third source represents a step toward the latter end: a page listing the twenty tunes, complete with texts (one and sometimes two stanzas) and collection data, which was included in the printed score. (This page faces the arrangement of the first tune in the manner of a preface, though it is not specifically titled as such. I have adopted the term “preface” for convenient reference.⁹) It is between this source and the notebook version that changes crucial to our study occur.

Sources ☐ and ☐ can be compared only in general terms here. First, there are some purely cosmetic differences. The melodies in ☐ are transposed to end on the same note, all accidentals placed at the front of each entry, and time signatures provided. But Bartók also *created* his raw material. Melodic, rhythmic and metric changes were incorporated in the preface version; ornaments virtually eliminated. As I will reveal in more detail later, the effect of these modifications is to make the structure of a tune more accessible to the traditionally-trained performer.

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☐: The arrangement

Further concern for the performer is shown in the arrangement. Here, traditional key signatures replace the unorthodox collection of accidentals frequently found in the earlier versions, and new Italian tempo designations supplement the metronome markings. The melodies in their final version derive directly from ☐; indeed, the only change in the notes themselves is that certain ornaments are reinstated. There are, however, important differences between the arrangement as a whole and the previous sources. The melodies are now harmonized, whereas they were originally unaccompanied. Bartók also ordered the tunes he had selected from the collections of ☐ and ☐ to form two separate but internally cohesive sets of ten pieces each (this ordering is of course reflected in ☐).¹⁰ Then too, the arrangement does

⁹ In his Foreword to *RFM* IV, p. viii, Suchoff mentions a letter from Bartók to Universal Edition dated April 11, 1918, in which the composer refers to an article he wrote about the Romanian *Colinde*, intended for publication and inclusion with the carol arrangements. This article has not been found, but we can assume that it was probably in the nature of a true preface to the composition—in which case it would be interesting to know if any mention was made of the changes in the tunes!

¹⁰ We should also note that in folk performance, the carols generally were not sung in any particular number or order. Both Bartók and Suchoff mention only that “four or five songs” were sung (see p. 193 and the article by Bartók cited in footnote 2 above, p. 120).

not include the vocal (that is, texted) line, which again raises the question brought up before: how will music alone compensate for the strong articulative function of the text? I suggest that Bartók's solution of this problem involved the structural clarification of the melodies themselves—clarifications created largely by the melodic, rhythmic and metric changes alluded to earlier. In the discussion that follows, I hope to show that this solution was influenced by the composer's desire to highlight those aspects of the tunes that conformed to the melodic criteria of Western art music. Indeed, Bartók sometimes created such conformance by subtly reshaping certain phrases.

Types of Change

Bartók's changes in the carols fall into three main classes: (1) the removal of incidental tones and ornaments, (2) the repositioning of barlines, and (3) the alteration of notes and rhythms. I have selected several carols representative of each type of change in the examples below. As stated above, the effect of Bartók's changes is to enhance the structural clarity of the melodies in accordance with certain norms of Western art music. (Most changes occur between the notebook and preface versions [B] and [C] though the transcription [A] and the final arrangement [D] will be mentioned where necessary.) All versions of each carol discussed are provided in the musical examples.¹¹

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One exception to this freedom of grouping seems to be a set of six *Steia* songs mentioned by Bartók in *RFM* IV, p. 190, as a note to melody 45n. Bartók also refers to two "farewell" carols with which the group of singers departed (p. 195, notes to melodies 110 and 120)—but neither of these nor the *Steia* set were used in the arrangement. (Melody 115d, given in Example 4, was part of the *Steia* set, but appears separately in *D*.)

¹¹ Key to the musical examples in the text:

The sources are indicated by upper-case letters. They are listed in the order that reflects the process of change from the most accurate notation of the original folk performance to the completed arrangement. Numbers following upper-case letters refer to the position of a melody in the source.

[A]: Final transcription of the melody from phonograph cylinders, in B. Bartók, *Rumanian Folk Music*, Vol. IV: *Carols and Christmas Songs (Colinde)*, ed. B. Suchoff (The Hague, 1975).

Example 9 is found in *Rumanian Folk Music*, Vol. V: *Maramureș County*, p. 53.

A melody variant is indicated by a lower-case letter following the number (e.g., 1ob). The version of a tune chosen is the one that most resembles the melody in its final form. These references are also provided in the editor's Foreword to *RFM* IV, p. xxxv, and in the Lampert article cited in [B] below.

Variations in the melody that occur in different stanzas are indicated below the [A] line (on a separate staff where necessary), and are identified with the appropriate stanza numbers. I have included only those stanza variants that make the tune identical to [B], [C], or [D] in a particular place.

[B]: Notebook entry of the tune closest to the form of the melody that appears in the arrangement. From Vera Lampert, "Quellenkatalog der Volksliedbearbeitung von Bartók," *Documenta Bartókiana*, ed. L. Somfai, Vol. 6 (Budapest, 1981), pp. 82–89. Melodies collected from 1910 to 1914.

1. Removal of incidental tones and ornaments

Characteristic of many tunes in their original form is a lack of clear melodic profile. This is attributable to embellishments and other extra notes which obscure the linear structure. Bartók consistently eliminated such notes when preparing the carols for arrangement, as in Example 1. The changes made here result in clearer articulation of the formal design. Let us examine how this is accomplished by noting first the tripartite structure of the piece—a central three-bar refrain enclosed by identical segments of two measures each.¹² In the earlier versions, the second phrase (starting in measure 3) is closed prematurely in bar 4 by the strongly cadential implication of the linear descent B-A-G.

☐: "Preface" version of the melody as Bartók had it appear, on a separate page preceding the harmonizations, in the score first published by Universal Edition, Vienna, in 1918.

☐: Melody as it appears in the arrangement, accompaniment excluded. Published U.E. 1918, Hawkes 1939.

Additional notes:

1. All source melodies have been aligned and transposed to the key of the arrangement for purposes of comparison. (☐ does not usually contain key or time signatures; here key signatures have been added, but the rest has been left as is.)

2. If there is no separate ☐ line, it is the same as ☐ except for added articulation and phrasing. The articulation of ☐ is placed on the ☐ staff above the notes. Comments pertaining to the articulation of ☐ are also placed above the notes, in square brackets []. Articulation below the notes refers to ☐ only. The complete articulation of a melody with a ☐ segment is obtained by substituting the ☐ bars for those of ☐ in the appropriate places.

3. Portions of music bracketed beneath the staff in ☐, ☐, and ☐ indicate text refrains. The text is included in all sources except the final arrangement. Texts are omitted in the examples.

4. Large and small commas above the staff were provided by Bartók in ☐. These main and secondary caesuras indicate, respectively, the major structural division and lesser points of articulation in the melody. (See also footnote 12.)

5. Tempo indications are those provided in ☐. No tempi are indicated by Bartók in ☐. I have omitted tempo markings from ☐ and ☐ for purposes of clarity. (While the metronome markings often differ between the earlier versions and the final arrangement, the nature of a tune is not fundamentally altered. Indeed, as Bartók's tempo changes in ☐ tend to accentuate the contrast between fast and slow pieces, the character of individual tunes is enhanced, while the set is more distinctively shaped as a whole.)

6. Dynamics (from ☐) are provided only in Examples 10 and 11, where they help clarify the relation between the two pieces. Sources ☐, ☐, and ☐ contain no dynamic indications.

¹² It should be noted that this structure is also defined by the caesuras Bartók has provided in ☐. Though the placement of caesuras was largely determined by the text (the caesuras occurring at the end of a text line, with the placement of the main caesura linked to the number of these lines) the nature of the melodic structure was also taken into account. Hence Bartók's additional term "melody line" to refer to "that portion of the melody falling upon a text line"—a concept which embraces the text-music relationship simultaneously. (See Bartók's Introduction to Part One of *RFM* IV, p. 11, footnote 14. Note he decides to group short refrains with a particular text line "depending on the musical relationship." Above on the same page, his determination of a proper text line is affected by "certain sequential and rhythmic repetitions" in the melody which seem to form "a certain unity, a kind of double phrase.") Throughout the examples in this study,

EXAMPLE 1.

[A] 18.
[B] 136.

[A] variant in stanzas 2, 4:

Allegro (♩ = 120)

[C] 1/2.

Removing the passing A pushes the phrase beyond this point—that is, it creates a skip between B and G, which strongly implies its “fill” by rising conjunct motion to the A in the following measure.¹³ (Slurring the notes B-G-A, as indicated upon repetition of the tune, reinforces the tight melodic connection fashioned between bars 4 and 5.) In addition, while bar 4 in versions [A] and [B] sounds closed as a I chord in G major, bar 4 of [C] suggests a harmony less bound to the tonic, which weakens the feeling of

we shall see that the changes Bartók makes in a melody clarify for the Western listener the structural divisions indicated in the original, unaltered version. I shall discuss the significance of this more fully later.

¹³ First, as the example indicates, the B-G alternative exists as a stanza variant in [A]. It is possible that Bartók either referred to his recording or (more likely) simply remembered that bar 4 was also sung in this manner. That is, Bartók's change in this measure might not have been wholly “original.” (An “original” change would be one without precedent in earlier sources of the tune.) Whatever the situation, the points I make are valid because Bartók *chose* this particular version rather than some other. (The distinction between those changes that can and cannot be identified as variants in the sources is discussed further in connection with Example 8.)

Second, the concepts and terms I employ here and throughout this study in referring to melodic processes are those introduced by Leonard B. Meyer in *Explaining Music* (Berkeley, 1973). Concepts of rhythmic articulation and grouping I refer to later are explained in Grosvenor W. Cooper and Leonard B. Meyer, *The Rhythmic Structure of Music* (Chicago, 1960). In addition, I have greatly benefitted from discussions with Professor Meyer and Peter Laki. Together they suggested the topic of my study and made many insightful comments on its presentation.

closure on the G. This allows the harmonic impetus of the phrase to extend over the barline into the A on the downbeat of bar 5, a metrically strong point of arrival whose impact is prolonged by the repeated A's which follow it. Indeed, since the chord implied by the A is a dominant (Bartók substitutes the supertonic, which is also harmonically open), the phrase tends to stretch still further, so that it encompasses the more stable tonic harmony implied by the G on the downbeat of measure 6. Bartók counters this tendency, however, by placing a divider mark between bars 5 and 6, which indicates to the performer his desire to keep the start of the reprise clear.

Again in bar 1, Bartók eliminates the note that would create closure before a structural comma (in this case, the comma that Bartók has indicated after measure 2 in \boxed{A}). Removing the G on the fourth eighth joins the first two bars more securely by permitting a direct approach to the goal tone G of bar 2. It also prevents the rising second G-A between bars 4 and 5 from being anticipated (see brackets in the example), thereby enhancing the structural integrity of each phrase.

Bartók's tendency to raise the structure to a higher architectonic level is illustrated in Example 2.

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EXAMPLE 2.

A 102 j.

2., 4: \flat 2., 4: \sharp

B 146.

2 4 6 8 10 12

1 + 1 2 2

Moderato (♩ = 200)

[second time poco legato; articulation marks only in mm. 5, 6 (same) + 7]

C II/2.

2 gap 4 6 8 10 gap fill

accompaniment: 2 4

D rhythmicization above the staff:

In [E], the initial repetition of the melodically self-contained neighbor-note figure encourages us to hear bars 1 and 2 additively, as 1 + 1. Bars 3 and 4, by contrast, tend to cling as a single two-measure unit through the momentum generated by their stepwise descent. (The melodic momentum here overrides the tendency of the one-bar grouping to continue beyond the first two measures, even though this tendency is strengthened by the closed, short-long rhythmic patterning in bars 3 and 4.) Bartók promotes a greater sense of melodic definition and direction in the first two measures of [E] by selecting a “structural” tone from each slurred pair of notes: D from the first bar, E from the second. Retrospectively, this melodic shaping gives the second pair of measures a structural purpose more clearly integrated with the previous material—that of complementing or “resolving” the ascent of bars 1 and 2 by descending towards the goal tone G in bar 4. Similarly in bars 8 to 11, the final D of the piece is established more securely as a melodic goal by filling the gap from E to C created between bars 9 and 10.

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It seems that in the first four measures, Bartók tried for the most symmetrical melodic design possible without adding new pitches to the tune (that is, substituting B and C for the repeated D's in the first measure). His changes enhance our awareness of structural organization above the bar level in two ways. First, the symmetrical melodic design and rhythmic parallelism of bars 1 to 4 strengthen our perception of these measures as a single formal entity, both here and when the phrase recurs. Second, once bars 3 and 4 have been heard, the two-bar segment is structurally more prominent than the one-bar segment, which nevertheless continues to be articulated by rhythmic repetition in each measure. Structural clarity on all hierarchic levels—four-bar, two-bar, and one-bar—thus replaces the confusion between levels apparent in [A] and [B] (where vacillation between the one- and two-bar levels results in a more weakly defined four-bar unit). Indeed, Bartók's changes permit these levels to establish themselves, in support of the main structural divisions he has indicated by the commas in [A].

The third eighth of bars 1 and 2 in the notebook version of the melody, though no longer sounded separately in [E], is not altogether missing in this form from the final arrangement. Rather, it has been transferred to the accompaniment, where the repeated quarter-eighth rhythm shown in the example helps promote the coherence and continuity of the patterns above. While consideration of the accompaniment's role in the completed arrangement might have influenced the changes Bartók made in the melody here and elsewhere, most modifications are explicable in terms of the structural clarification of the melodic line alone, without reference to the accompaniment. (Therefore, I will discuss the accompaniment of a carol only when it appears to be directly connected to changes made in the melody itself.)

BARTÓK'S ROMANIAN CHRISTMAS CAROLS

Bartók did not eliminate any pitches in measure 6 of [A], but clarified their function nonetheless by distinguishing ornamental tones from structural ones. His choices promote formal differentiation in the melody, since the central refrain is now characterized by disjunct motion, while conjunct contours are preserved in the opening and closing phrases. We should also note that the rhythmicization of the grace notes in measure 6 of the final arrangement ([D]) is not substituted for the notation of version [A], but is rather added on a staff above this version. In this manner Bartók clearly indicates to the performer the structural hierarchy within the bar.

EXAMPLE 3.

[A] 55.

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
[B] 148.

stronger
than

Andante (♩ = 72)
[poco legato]

[C] II/4.

[D] rhythmicization above
the staff:

* [C] gives this rhythm as , but as it appears in no other source, it is probably a misprint.

In versions [A] and [B] of Example 3 above, the grace notes in the first measure join the quarter notes to the eighths which follow them. The connection is both melodic and rhythmic in nature: melodic, because the ornamentation either anticipates the following eighth (as between the G and the A) or bridges the gap between quarter and eighth (as between the G and the C over the barline); rhythmic because by denying the quarter notes their full value, the grace notes do not permit the short-long (eighth-quarter) groupings established at the beginning of the measure to close. The embellishment instead anticipates the following beat, joining quarter to eighth in a reversed long-short pattern. This rhythmic grouping falls across the barline instead of inside it, creating functional ambiguities and blurring the phrase structure.

The confusion begins in measure 1, where the first eighth is initially heard as a strong beat, and the following quarter as a weak one (though stressed owing to its length relative to the eighth). The grace notes disturb the emerging short-long pattern and bind the quarter to the next eighth (A), so as to suggest that the quarter note is now the strong member of a new, long-short group. This places the function of the first eighth in doubt retrospectively: was it a downbeat or an upbeat? In any case, once the quarter-eighth grouping is established, we expect it to continue—at least beyond the third beat of bar 2 (the momentum already generated compensates for the lack of grace notes after the A, which nonetheless remain in the transcription). The very fact that we expect to hear the third and fourth beats of this bar as joined, even if only in the instant before we realize that a quarter note has replaced the expected eighth on the F, leads to the blurring of an important articulation point within the first three-bar phrase. This point, which divides the phrase into two parts, occurs between beats 3 and 4 (I have marked this place with a comma in [C]). Its structural significance is indicated by the rhythmic reversal in the second half of the measure, signalling the approach to the cadence.

By removing the ornaments in [C], Bartók eliminates the impetus which made it possible to join quarters to eighths over the barline, and instead promotes an unambiguous short-long grouping that stays within the measure. The first eighth of the piece is clearly defined as a downbeat within this framework, and the space now naturally present between the third and fourth beats of measure 2 allows us to grasp the articulative function of the rhythmic reversal as it occurs.

The elimination of ornaments promotes structural clarity in other ways. For example, the embellishment before the final G in measure 2 might have caused undue stress to be placed on this note, creating too strong an articulation between bars 2 and 3 and thus closing the phrase prematurely. Without grace notes before it, the G joins more smoothly with the remainder of the phrase. Still other reasons may have influenced Bartók's decision to remove the ornaments: the unorna-

mented melody is open to a greater number of possibilities for harmonization, and the original embellishments simply do not transfer well from the voice to the piano.¹⁴

Bartók's modifications in measures 3 and 6 again illustrate functional differentiation, in a manner comparable to bar 6 of the previous example. Changing the F to a grace note and the E to an eighth emphasizes the structural similarity of measures 3 and 6 to those before them, making it easier to assimilate these cadential measures within the phrases.¹⁵ At the same time, the embellishment serves as a cadential marker, articulating each phrase at its close.

¹⁴ With regard to my second point, it is worth considering to what extent Bartók's changes in the carols were influenced by the fact that he was writing piano music, as opposed to music for another instrument (the violin, for example). Besides encumbering the melodic line, the ornaments tend to sound too percussive when played on the piano. But no instrument would be able to transmit fully the suppleness and spontaneity of the original vocal gestures. This is something Bartók surely must have realized and reflected upon before selecting the instrument he would use for his arrangement. (Indeed, Bartók may have selected the piano partly because it was the most accessible instrument; that is, the best for getting his music widely performed, not because it was "ideal." Further, a piano arrangement was the most appropriate compositional choice in terms of the traditional Western repertoire for the instrument.)

The first point I make, that an unornamented melody is easier to harmonize than an embellished one, is also related to the choice of performance medium. Leaving aside for now the question of harmonic progression, it seems reasonable to suggest that some of Bartók's changes may have been prompted by the very situation of having to realize an accompaniment in pianistic terms. But here again, I think Bartók's initial decision to write for the piano tells us something about his compositional criteria. Selecting the piano obviously meant that he was prepared to do those things that would best suit the instrument's character, in technical and in qualitative terms.

So, important as wholly pianistic influences are, I do not stress them in this study. This is because there are other criteria that seem to me to have been more important to Bartók when making changes in the tunes. One indication of the preeminence of these other criteria is that there are often times when, judging solely by pianistic standards, certain ornaments could be retained, but they are not. Situations such as these have led me to believe that pianistic criteria alone do not explain Bartók's decision-making as satisfactorily as does the need for structural clarity in a melody, insofar as this can be conceived apart from a specific instrument. I would not deny, however, that the "givens" associated with writing piano music are reflected in Bartók's compositional choices, and incorporated into those choices that perhaps were made primarily for other reasons.

¹⁵ The treatment of the refrain in this example seems to demonstrate clearly that in the absence of a text, musical criteria were of primary importance in determining whether the refrain portion of the melody was to be a separate phrase in itself (as in Exs. 1 and 2) or part of a larger gesture. Nevertheless, it is important to note that bars 3 and 6 of this melody are still perceived as separate from what precedes them—Bartók's changes just assure that the phrase does not close before these measures. So in a subtle way, the separate quality of the text refrain is preserved. What is enhanced, however, is the contextual sense of the refrain as part of a phrase and of the tune as a whole. This contextual sense is something which music seems to need in order to cohere (at least to Western ears), and which was not as important when the words were there to help articulate structural divisions.

Examples 5 and 8 present similar situations to the one just described. In these tunes, the refrain again is heard as a distinct structural unit, but also as part of a larger phrase—mainly as a result of changes which help bind the refrain to the preceding measures.

So far, we have seen how Bartók articulates and differentiates phrases by either removing notes or changing their functional status. His changes tend to point up or create melodic and rhythmic parallelisms within the tunes. In Example 3, for instance, the repeated rhythmic patterning is clarified considerably by the removal of the ornaments; while analogous patterning is fashioned between the first two pairs of measures in Example 2. The importance the composer attached to such parallelisms in promoting structural clarity will become increasingly evident during the course of this study.

2. Repositioning of barlines

Metrical alterations form a second category of changes made in the carols. These may involve a simple switch of time signature, as from an implied $\frac{4}{4}$ to $\frac{2}{4}$ between versions **B** and **C** in Example 4.

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EXAMPLE 4.

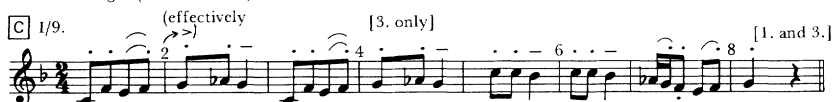
A 115 d.



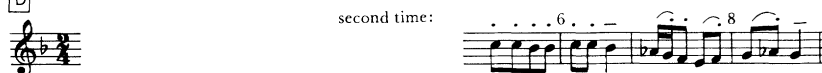
B 144.



Allegro ($\text{♩} = 132-138$)



D



The explanation for the change in meter is straightforward enough: barlines in the notebook often seem to have been placed after each complete text line, whereas in the preface purely musical considerations came to the fore. We should note that the barlines added in [C] do not alter the structural unit defined by the barlines in [B]—two measures in $\frac{2}{4}$ time. This unit continues to be articulated by the musical repetition in the first four bars of [C]. However, the extra barlines change the relative weight of the beats within each two-bar group. That is, the second and fourth measures of [C]—and especially the downbeats in these measures—are now metrically heavier than they were before. This causes greater emphasis to be placed on the arrival point of G in the melody. (Even the G on the second beat of bars 2 and 4 is reinforced by the tenuto mark placed on it.) Strengthening the G clarifies the direction of the melody as ascending from C to G within each two-bar phrase. The momentum and sense of goal-directedness in bars 1 and 3 are thereby enhanced.

The stress placed on the second half of each phrase also helps establish the final G of the piece more firmly as goal of the entire melodic line. Such metric support is particularly important at the cadence in this example, since the dominant rather than the more conclusive tonic chord is implied.

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Example 5 illustrates a more local type of metric variation. The repositioning of the barline between measures 3 and 4 accomplishes several things that affect performance and consequently our perception of the melodic structure. First, it emphasises the sequential character of the second and third bars. Second, it moves the F from a strong to a weak metric position, and the D from a weak to a strong one. The D is thus heard more clearly as goal of the phrase—an effect especially desirable here since the melodic motion is more difficult to anticipate than usual. (In particular, the descent F-E-D would not be expected in the analogous place of an example of Western art music. A more typical alternative for these notes might be F \sharp -G-A.) Bartók's decision to enclose the D within a $\frac{2}{8}$ bar, even though this grouping is not a common one in Western art music, might also be explained by considering an alternative: incorporating the D into the previous measure to create a single bar in $\frac{4}{4}$ time. In this case an accent (albeit a secondary one) would again occur on the F, and the cadential D would be weak as before.

Moving the barline not only clarifies the cadence in bar 4, but makes it easier to grasp the structure of the melody as a whole. The singly-grouped D is a complement to the first note of the piece, an E which Bartók sets off from the rest of the phrase. Significantly, these two notes describe the main course of the melodic motion, which is completed by the return to E at the end of the tune. In addition, the successive downbeats on the D and on the following A in bar 5 call attention to the subtle

EXAMPLE 5.

[A] 113.

[B] 140.

[C] I/6. Andante (♩ = 88)

parallel between the ascending fifth here and the ascending fifth E-B which opens the melody.

3. Alteration of notes and rhythms

In the examples considered thus far, no changes were made in pitches other than removing certain ones, and rhythmic changes arose solely from lengthening certain notes to compensate for those omitted or reinterpreted as ornaments. Actual modifications in pitch and rhythm do occur, however, in the category of changes to be discussed next. These perhaps reveal most clearly the aesthetic values influencing Bartók's compositional choices. A case in point is the pitch change from C to D on the second eighth of the melody in Example 6.

It seems clear that Bartók not only tried to make the first two measures of [C] more similar to each other, but opted for the most regular grouping within each bar. Repeated notes in Western art music tend to be grouped in precisely the manner Bartók selected—that is, inside and

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EXAMPLE 6.

* [B] contains elements of both tunes given, but is closer to 111e.

[A] 111 d.

[B] 142.

[C] 1/8. Allegretto (♩ = 104–108)

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not across the beat. It is therefore significant that bar 1 was modified to conform to bar 2 and not the other way around. The articulation indicated in the arrangement (two notes separated plus two notes slurred) further reinforces the binary division of the first and second measures.

Bartók's change creates a melodic patterning in which structural tones fall on each beat, clearly tracing the stepwise descent to the G on the downbeat of bar 3. In the unaltered versions, however, the absence of a regular, consistent grouping of notes results in functional ambiguity—compare, for example, the functional clarity of the opening D in the final version with the vagueness of this note in versions A and B. This uncertainty of purpose at the very outset makes the measure less easy to apprehend as part of a larger goal-oriented whole.

In Example 7, pitch changes in the preface version (☐) again produce more traditional patternings which tighten and clarify the melodic structure.

EXAMPLE 7.

[A] 115 a.

variant 3. 3):

[B] 144.

[C] 1/10. Più allegro (♩ = 152)

Bartók makes two different substitutions in the first four-bar phrase: E for F on the third eighth of bars 1 and 3, and G for F on the first eighth of bars 2 and 4. In the first instance, introduction of the appoggiatura E breaks the undifferentiated repetition of the F, and in so doing lends the F greater structural significance. Specifically, the skip from C to F is accomplished on beat 1; the F is then reinforced through the impetus provided by the E on the next beat. In the second measure, Bartók establishes G as goal of the melodic ascent by placing this note on the strongly accented first eighth.¹⁶ As a result the function of the remaining notes is

¹⁶ As in Examples 4 and 6, the extra barlines added between versions ☐ and ☐ of the tune contribute to the shaping and articulation of each phrase.

unequivocally defined: the A is a weak auxiliary and the G's on beat 2 confirm the main point of arrival. By contrast, functional ambiguity and uncertainty as to the overall direction of the line characterize the notebook version. In breaking the chain of repeated F's, the A takes on a structural prominence which is then undermined by the G's that follow.

Although the gain in structural clarity achieved in the melody could alone explain and justify the changes just discussed, another consideration might well have provided Bartók's point of departure. I refer to the patterning of this carol after a variant of the same tune which is placed immediately ahead of the former in the first series of ten pieces (I/9., Example 4).¹⁷ Again, it is significant that the originally atypical, irregular pitch patterning of Example 7—that is, in terms of melodic construction in Western art music—is altered in ♩ to resemble the more familiar, regular patterning of Example 4. (This conformance is especially apparent in the first four bars of each melody.) Further, the ordering of these pieces—minor version ending on an implied half cadence followed by major version closing on the tonic—and their placement at the end of the set as a kind of high-level cadential device suggest precedents in Western art music which may explain why Bartók tried to emphasize the similarities of the tunes in the first place.

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It is also noteworthy that these two carols, numbers 9 and 10 in the first set of pieces, are the only examples of *Steá* tunes (tunes probably of Western origin, adopted by the peasants) used in Bartók's arrangement. *Steá* tunes tend to be simpler structurally—they do not contain refrains, for instance—and more straightforward in their harmonic implications than the other carols in the collection. The fact that Bartók selected this type of tune to close his set indicates two things. The first is his desire to balance and perhaps "resolve" some of the more complex moments in the preceding music. By so doing, he fashions a concluding section whose function resembles that of many others in the Western repertory. The second thing suggested is that Western art music generally exemplified the sort of structural clarity Bartók wanted here, to the extent that he drew upon melodies from this tradition.¹⁸

Only one pitch change is made in the second four-bar phrase: the substitution of G for F on the third eighth of bar 7. This extends by one measure the motivic parallelism of bars 5 and 6, allowing a more cumu-

¹⁷ Vera Lampert also notes this similar patterning of the two carols in her article, "Bartók's Choice of Theme for Folksong Arrangement: Some Lessons of the Folk-Music Sources of Bartók's Works," *Studia Musicologica* XXIV/3-4 (Budapest, 1982), 408.

¹⁸ It is intriguing to speculate whether, given the presumed artistic origin of these tunes, Bartók's changes actually may have restored the melodies to their original form! For another possible example of such "restoration," but this time applied to a genuinely "folk" tune, see footnote 22.

EXAMPLE 8.

[A] 10 a.

variants:

Stanza 4. Others 2.-3. 4. Others 4. Others Others

[B] 147.

gap gap

*(In both [A] and [B], quarter-tone inflections are included in the key signature.)

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Andante (♩ = 72)

[C] II/3.

a b

J. of M. - Arauco

lative, goal-oriented patterning ($a + a' + a'' + b$) to supplant the loosely additive structure ($a + a' + b + b'$) of the earlier versions. Moreover, the last two measures are now differentiated in terms of their harmonic implications. The patterning in the preface version suggests that the F in bar 7 resolves a dissonance, so that the G's before it are not part of a V chord.¹⁹ This means the dominant appears only in measure 8 to articulate the final cadence, and is not anticipated, as the patterning of [A] and [B] implies.

Still more extensive changes occur in Example 8. The fact that all the pitch substitutions made are found among the melody variants provided in [A] suggests that perhaps Bartók compiled the final version

¹⁹ And indeed, in the arrangement bar 7 is harmonized with a IV chord. V follows on the first beat of the final bar.

from his recordings and in this instance, a transcription of an unrecorded performance (indicated as “others” in the example). While this might have been the case, our main concern still lies in assessing the effects of Bartók's changes on the melody, with the aim of revealing the artistic values and other considerations which may have guided the composer in making his decisions. For example, the obvious enhancement of structural clarity that results from the changes we have examined so far seems to reflect Bartók's Western-instilled standards of melodic construction while it demonstrates his concern for an audience accustomed to the primarily German repertoire of Western art music.

Our purpose notwithstanding, it still might be useful to distinguish between those changes which appear as variants in [A] and those which cannot be traced to either recordings or other transcriptions. If all the changes made in the carols could be found among the stanza variants, we might hypothesize that these variants were to Bartók a pool of options within which he could make his selections while remaining “faithful” to actual performances. At least in this work, however, such adherence to variants collected in the field does not appear to have been Bartók's sole or even primary guide. I shall return to the attitude this reflects with regard to the sources later. The important point for now is that choices were made, regardless of their type.

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In the present example, Bartók smooths out the contours of bars 1 and 2 by filling in the structurally ambiguous gaps D-B and A#-F#. (The gap A#-C# between these measures is retained, however, for it helps articulate the start of a new descending gesture, as does the fourth F#-B in bar 3.) As a consequence, the first and second measures become more similar to each other and to the refrain of bars 3 and 4, after whose unbroken scalar descent Bartók could well have modelled the previous phrases. Indeed, each bar contains part of the next so that each sounds like an extension of the one before it. Most striking in this regard is the refrain, whose echo-like quality contrasts with the more sharply defined character it once possessed.²⁰ By assimilating the refrain to the preceding music—or more accurately, by reworking the previous measures so that this seems to be the case—Bartók assures that the main caesura of the piece falls after bar 4 rather than at the end of bar 2. In other words, his changes ensure the structural integrity of the first large four-bar

²⁰ Perhaps the feeling of echo is enhanced between measures 2 and 3 because the augmented second which is part of the shared pattern B-A#-G-F# in these bars is particularly memorable. In [B], bar 3 is clearly separated from the preceding measure by the repeated E's at the close of bar 2. Because these notes occur in the midst of an irregular pitch sequence, they tend to arrest the melodic motion. The parallelism suggested with the repeated A#'s which close bar 1 further emphasizes the articulative quality of the E's. Finally, as the pitch patterning of the refrain is not clearly anticipated in the previous measure (as it is in [C]), bar 3 appears more distinct from the material that preceded it.

phrase. The slurs that bridge the barlines further promote coherence and continuity within the line.

The effect of Bartók's changes, however, go beyond the creation of a melody whose scalar patterning is once again easier for the Western-trained musician to articulate as part of a larger structural unit. The changes made help clarify the relation between the first and second phrases, and so enhance the structural logic of the piece as a whole. This accomplishment might best be appreciated by comparing the initial four-bar phrase with the following phrase of three measures, bars 5–7. It is obvious that the second phrase is but a compressed version of the first, which suggests an important reason for Bartók having altered the first phrase as he did: patterning bar 2 (bracketed as *a* in the example) similarly to bars 3 and 4 (*b*) allows the single gesture of bars 6 and 7 (*c*) to stand for both *a* and *b* at the final cadence. The long-term structural importance of the notes shared between measures 2 and 3–4 is that one gesture can be superimposed upon the other. Indeed, it is precisely because these measures are so much alike that their compression is the more effective and artistically appropriate when the phrase is repeated. Likewise, assuring that the caesura falls after bar 4 and no earlier ultimately enables us to understand clearly that the end of the refrain becomes the end of the piece.

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Two changes made in bar 1 remain to be discussed. First, the sixteenths which disrupt the flow of the line in [B] are eliminated, and the rhythmic profile of the measure made both more smooth and more distinctive by the quick opening flourish. This figure, which appears to have been restored in rhythmicized form from [A], also helps articulate the start of each phrase. Second, the direction of the melody at the outset is reversed from a descending minor third (D-B) to an ascending one (B-D). This change makes the course of the melody easier to anticipate by suggesting immediately the goal tone of B. Such anticipation of the goal could help orient the Western listener within a melody that, even modified, might sound less familiar than many others. In addition, the third B-D prefigures the similarly ascending minor third A#-C# between bars 1 and 2, which together with the cadential gap F#-B describes the main course of the melodic motion in the phrases.

One of several rhythmic alterations in the carols occurs in Example 9. The change in bar 7 facilitates our perception of a larger structural unit. In [A] and [B], the trochaic grouping of the slurred figure on the second half of beat 2 is closed on the lowest rhythmic level (1. in the example). That is, the sixteenth on the weak part of the group is emphasized by the rush of shorter notes which move toward it, so that it tends not to become an upbeat to the following accent. Instead, it enhances the stability and cohesiveness of the group—qualities which in turn tend to check the melodic descent at the barline, just before the goal tone G in measure 8 is reached. Beaming this group with the D before it likewise

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EXAMPLE 9.

A Mar. 19.
B 139.*

* without slur in m. 6, but with both key and time signatures

C 1/5. [un poco staccato] Allegro moderato (♩ = 96-92)

D

1. open
2. closed
3. closed
4. open

(pickup to repetition of tune)

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calls attention to the separation between the first and second beats of bar 7. Indeed, the unaltered grouping in this measure gives rise to a series of accents crossing all rhythmic levels shown in the example (in the order 3.-2.-1.). This causes emphasis to be placed on each individual beat, at the expense of the listener's grasp of the entire two-bar gesture.

Bartók's alterations in \square , which affect both the rhythmic patterning of the notes and their articulation, appear to have one aim: that of weakening the second beat of bar 7 so it connects easily both to the first beat and to the final measure. More specifically, the second beat is divided and each half grouped with the accent nearest it on either side. The D, for instance, clearly is made an appendage to the first beat of the bar. Not only is it slurred to the B♭, but it is dissociated from the triplet by being beamed separately. In addition, by shortening the D and thus detaching it more from what follows, the staccato mark reinforces the connection of the eighth to the accented quarter preceding it.

On the second half of the second beat, the new sixteenth triplet patterning replaces the abruptly closed trochee of the earlier versions with

an open-ended, dactylic group. In contrast with the jagged profile of [A] and [B], the smooth, evenly-spaced rhythmic design of this group poses no obstacle to the progress of the melody. Consequently, the triplet readily attaches itself to the G across the barline, as Bartók's phrasing suggests.

Another stressed weak beat, comparable to that which formerly arose on the second half of beat 2 in bar 7, occurs in the final bar of [C]. Here, the strong tendency of the eighth to connect to an accent in the next measure is thwarted by the double bar. As a result, the emphasis that was expected to fall on the other side of the barline accrues on the eighth instead, undercutting the previous downbeat. Bartók twice avoids weakening the downbeat in the arrangement ([D]) by "reinterpreting" the eighth as a pickup to the repetition of the tune. This involves a change of pitch (from G to D; the fourth below the tonic commonly being used as a pickup tone in folk as well as in art music) and the addition of a rest to articulate the new section clearly. At the very end of the piece, however, the eighth is eliminated, leaving no doubt as to the melodic and metric goal of the phrase.

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In closing, we should note that the reason Bartók made the changes in measure 8 only in the arrangement itself ([D]) and not earlier appears to be text-related: the carols are still texted in the preface ([C]), and the final eighth there underlies the last syllable of the lyric.

Finally, we arrive at an example that contains virtually every type of change we have encountered in the carols: pitch and rhythmic alteration, rebarring and the removal of ornaments. (See Example 10.)

This example differs from those before it in at least one important respect. Previously, when Bartók made changes that emphasized the similarities between two melodic patterns in a phrase (as in Example 2), these changes enhanced the difference between the phrase containing these patterns and other sections of the tune. Here, however, Bartók seems to have tried to make all phrases of the melody as much alike as possible. His reason for doing this can be explained best in terms of a balance struck between concern for projecting the structure clearly and respect for the intrinsic character of a melody which itself suggests

EXAMPLE 10.

In [A], Bartók indicates that this is an incomplete melody with structure 6 + 6, [6], 6 + 6 (middle part missing at *).

[A] 12 j.

The musical notation for Example 10 consists of three staves. The top staff is a single melodic line in 4/8 time, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It contains a sequence of eighth and sixteenth notes, with an asterisk (*) marking a specific point in the melody. The middle staff is a single melodic line in 4/8 time, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat, and contains a sequence of eighth and sixteenth notes. The bottom staff is labeled "variants:" and contains two short melodic fragments, each in 4/8 time, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat.

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EXAMPLE 10. (continued)

[B] 150. 

[C] II/6. 

[D] accompaniment:

(1) 

(2) 


(3) 


(4) 

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Carol II/7. (Example 11) is inserted here.

Then the present carol resumes:

(5) 

(6) 

how this will be accomplished. These considerations are related directly to the specific changes made and the effect of these changes on the melody.


Perhaps the most important characteristic of Bartók's changes in this carol is their tendency to simplify the originally more complex me-

lodic and rhythmic profile of the tune for the benefit of structural articulation at a higher level. Two changes articulate this level most clearly: the removal of every other barline, and the replacement of dotted quarter notes with quarters. Together these changes weaken the accents on the downbeats of measures 2, 4, 6 and 8 in the unaltered versions (A and B). Of course the downbeats in these measures are created by the presence of the extra barlines, but the added stress these beats receive results from the length of the notes before them. That is, because the dotted quarters are significantly longer than the surrounding notes, they tend to be perceived as major points of rest in the phrase, after which the tune resumes with renewed emphasis. (This is especially true in bar 2 of B, following a fermata over the dotted quarter.) Indeed, the articulative power of the dotted quarter—downbeat eighth combination is such that if the patterning in B could be said to give rise to any higher-level grouping at all, it would define two-bar phrases starting on the even-numbered bars and closing after the odd-numbered ones.

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Bartók's changes disallow this grouping by weakening the strong articulation formerly present between odd- and even-numbered measures. The dotted quarters and extra barlines of A and B no longer interrupt the flow of the melody. Specifically, the first singly-beamed eighth and quarter of each bar in C connect more easily to the following pair of notes than before, when two adjacent stressed beats (on the dotted quarter and downbeat eighth) split the phrase. Shortening the dotted quarter also makes the last two notes of each bar a rhythmic echo of the previous two notes. This facilitates the assimilation of the repeated melodic figure G-F# (and at the end of the tune, the two D's) to the rest of the measure.²¹

The other changes Bartók makes in the melody strengthen our perception of the larger, higher-level structural units he has created. The

²¹ Bartók's conception of the phrase is illumined by comparing the different time signatures provided in versions A and C—specifically, the implication of these meters for performance. In A, the 3/8 bar is clearly separated from the previous measure, which is thought of in terms of a different, longer note value. In C, however, these measures are both coupled and subdivided through a common time unit. It is significant that the eighth is kept as the basic value in C, for with the shortening of the dotted quarter the signature could easily have been changed to a more familiar 4/4. Bartók's choice implies that the quarters do not so much stop the line as give it pause (that is, the pianist should be aware of the difference between ♩. and ♩  in performance). The flowing quality of the line is emphasized further by the accompaniment, which "fills in" the second half of each quarter note in the melody. At the same time, the accompaniment supports the subdivisions within each bar indicated by the time signature (this is evident from the beaming of the notes, and their rhythmic and harmonic grouping). Finally, we should note that the subdivisions in C still reflect those of the original performance—2 + 3 + 3. This could not have been achieved within a 4/4 meter. Bartók's choice of time signature thus suggests his desire to preserve the integrity of smaller units of structure while presenting them as part of a larger whole.

removal of ornaments in bars 2 and 6 of [B] helps maintain a clear separation between each phrase. In bar 3, the rhythmic impetus of the grace notes would have placed undue stress on the following G, thus breaking the melodic gesture as before. Eliminating the ornaments also keeps the last note of the tune from being heard too frequently in advance of the final measure. This heightens the sense of arrival on the pitch D at the end of the piece.

The substitution of D for E \flat on the second eighth of bar 2 in [C] represents Bartók's most subtle effort to fashion the closest resemblance possible between the phrases. At first glance it would seem that no change was necessary, for the first two notes of the unaltered measure correspond perfectly to the repeated G's which open the tune. But Bartók obviously considered the stepwise inflection of the line a more essential feature of the melodic patterning. His change makes the opening of bar 2 more like that of bar 1 and the other measures in this important respect. Specifically, the neighbor-note figure E \flat -D-E \flat reflects, insofar as is possible without modifying the tune further, the G-A-G of bar 1 and C-B-C in bars 3 and 4. The very nature of this reflection, clearly recognizable in outline yet imperfect in detail (compare, for example, the metric position of the figure in bar 2 to the position of this figure in the other measures), enhances the shadowy quality of the tune as a whole.

Earlier I suggested two criteria that probably influenced the specific changes Bartók made in this carol. The first of these criteria, structural clarity, is manifested here in much the same manner it was in the examples I have already discussed. That is, the tune is simplified (in this case almost schematized) so that higher articulative levels can emerge. To Western listeners, the creation of these higher levels of structure provides some aural perspective on the tune; a way to relate local detail to a larger formal design. Bartók's standard of clarity also seems to have been related to Western art music, especially to German compositional values of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For instance, his limited use of rhythmic values and his decision to eliminate those ornaments which did not serve an articulative as well as a purely decorative purpose could be said to reflect the established compositional virtue of economy in the fashioning of themes and in their development.

In this discussion so far I have stressed the relationship between the changes made and the structural clarity of the melody. A connection can also be made between clear structure and the enhancement of a tune's affective characteristics, at least insofar as the latter is influenced by particular melodic and rhythmic features. In other words, sharpening the external profile of a melody tends to define the character of that melody more clearly. It is precisely this inner nature of a tune that is the second criterion to be considered in assessing Bartók's changes. The present ex-

ample is distinguished from the previous ones by its ambiguously echo-like quality, which characterizes the tune in its earliest version. Bartók's alterations only emphasize the circular nature of the melody: the rhythmic changes create repetitive patterning within each bar, while the melodic change in measure 2 of \square enhances the similarity in pitch movement between bars.

We may detect a paradox between the creation of distinct structural levels and the fact that the very changes which bring these about also seem to underline the lack of clearly goal-directed movement and marked differentiation among the phrases. I think this can be explained best by a statement which could apply to all the carols, but is particularly apt here where structural clarification seems to be at odds with the subtle quality of the music: what is lost to the melody in incidental character as a result of Bartók's changes is gained in essential character, in terms of both outer structure and inner emotive power. In this case, the altered version of the tune could be said to play upon a seeming contradiction by preserving and even intensifying the uniquely noncommittal quality of the original within a clearly articulated framework.

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We can discover yet another, possibly more powerful expression of obscurity-in-clarity by looking beyond the melody to the entire piece and its accompaniment. In the final arrangement (\square), the melody is repeated without change four times, then two additional times after the next carol in the set. Each repetition of the tune is harmonized differently; which is nothing new in itself, for this is done to some extent in all the pieces. What distinguishes this carol from the others, however, is that the harmonization so complements the indecisiveness of the melody that the harmonic goal of each repetition is not defined until the very end of the tune—that is, in every fourth bar. This uneasy type of accompaniment suggests an important reason that Bartók may have tried to keep as many parameters constant in each phrase of the melody as possible: harmony could then assume a greater role in interpreting the melodic structure. Perhaps Bartók regarded harmony as the ideal way to express the essential ambiguity of the tune. On the one hand, the constantly shifting harmonies emphasize the lack of clear goal-directedness in the line. On the other, this instability is validated in terms of a new, higher level of structure: that articulated between the points of relative tonal clarity at the close of each repetition.

Bartók's tendency to think in terms of ever-larger structural units is demonstrated further by the way the presumed structure of the original tune is reflected in the relationship of the tune with the carol that follows it in the complete set of pieces. To properly appreciate this accomplishment we should realize that the melody given in \square is an incomplete one. Bartók assumed (from his knowledge of other tunes with similar syllabic structures) that this carol had once contained a refrain between bars 4

and 5. Given the similarity of the remaining music and the more varied melodic profile of most of the other carols, we might expect that the refrain would have supplied some contrasting musical material—though not so different as to be impossible to incorporate—between both halves of the tune. And it is precisely such a relationship of refrain to surrounding music that appears to be mirrored, on a much higher level, in the sequence of carols that appears in the set. Four repetitions of the tune are followed (after a fermata at the double bar) by a new, quicker carol, which is repeated three times with relatively straightforward harmonizations (Example 11). Despite its blocky profile and assertive character, the new carol displays an obvious affinity with the preceding tune. Not the least of the similarities between the two melodies is their isorhythmic patterning, which was fashioned in both cases by a substantial adjustment in the fluid rhythms of the original performance.²² The new melody also lacks one of its parts: in this case, a concluding segment, which emphasizes the complementary nature of the tunes. But even more important than these rhythmic and formal resemblances is the fact that the new tune is clearly a melodically compressed form of the old.

A pause at the double bar again articulates the interlude, separating it this time from the return and final two repetitions of the first carol. The structural similarity of the melodies, which overrides their great contrast in mood, encourages us to hear all three segments—initial tune, variant, and return of the first tune—as a single unit within the context of the entire set.²³

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²² It is possible that in making his rhythmic changes in both tunes, Bartók felt he was actually “restoring” the melodies to their originally strict, *tempo giusto* rhythm. This suggestion is supported by several statements made by the composer in his Introduction to *RFM* IV. On page 12, for example, he says that rhythmic classification of the melodies is difficult for two main reasons: “(1) the original *tempo giusto* performance has, in many cases, given way to a more or less *rubato* style; (2) originally equal values (for example, ♩) are replaced, again in many cases, by unequal values (for example, ♩♩).” He then adds, in footnote 18 on the same page: “The evidence points to *tempo giusto* (strict dance rhythm) as the original rhythm for all Colinda melodies. . . . a rhythm of unequal values can be regarded, in certain cases, as a transformation of an originally equal-valued rhythm.” Also significant, as both carols are marked *Parlando* in [A] and [B], is Bartók’s footnote on page 29: “The *parlando-rubato* performance of many Colinda melodies is . . . to be regarded merely as an extension of the original *tempo giusto* rhythm.”

I think it is important to point out, however, that whatever Bartók’s reasons for simplifying the tunes rhythmically may have been, the fact remains that the structural clarity of the melodies is greatly enhanced. It is this latter point I wish to emphasize, not Bartók’s motivations in making his changes.

²³ It is worth recalling that the two *Steau* tunes (Exs. 4 and 7; numbers 9 and 10 in the first set) also formed a structural unit within the group of pieces as a whole—though the function of this unit was cadential rather than that of a contrasting middle section, as in the present case.

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EXAMPLE 11.

In [A], Bartók indicates that this is an incomplete melody with structure 6 + 6, 6, (6 + 6) (third part missing at *)

[A] 12 r.

var.:

[B] 151.

[C] 11/7.

Varianza della precedente (♩ = 88)

(1) G V
 harmonizations (2) G iii
 at the cadence: (3) D I
 (G V)

Each member of this tripartite group is further connected and articulated harmonically. For example, the clearest cadence in the first part occurs at its close (the end of the fourth repetition of the tune, [D] 4. in Example 10), on a G major triad. This same chord only occurs again to conclude the entire group—that is, at the end of the third part ([D] 6.). (The other cadences in the first and third sections are not nearly as decisive as these two; they are clear only in comparison to the vague harmonies which precede them in bars 1–3 of each repetition.) The middle section is linked to the cadence before it by the continuation of the G major tonic in its first bar, while the D major chord which closes the interlude functions retrospectively as a dominant to the G in the melody at the start of the third section.

Finally, the central position of this group of carols within the second set of pieces—as numbers 6, 7 and 6 respectively—represents, if not yet another “refrain” (in relation to carols 1–5 on one side and 8–10 on the other), at least a clear element of contrast with the other single pieces in the set. This reflects Bartók’s concern for balance on an even larger scale. Contrast among the pieces must have been an important composi-

tional objective, for it was surely the idiosyncratic nature of the tunes I have just been discussing that led Bartók to select them for arrangement in the first place. Such a consideration would concur with the tendency to contrast and balance groups of character pieces in art music of the nineteenth century.

As we have seen, Bartók's attempt to balance clear design and distinctive character in a melody appears inseparable from his effort to make higher levels of structure apparent in that melody. In this example, structural levels are articulated through the changes made in the melody itself, in the harmonization of the tune, and in the relationship fashioned between the tune and its neighbors in the set. My study as a whole, however, has been concerned with the first area mentioned; namely, the way Bartók's changes affect the melody alone to make a structural hierarchy possible.

The Relationship of Folk to Art Music in the Carol Arrangements

In concluding, I would like to consider Bartók's changes in a broader sense: as indicative of the relation between folk and art music. While my observations pertain strictly only to the carols, it is hoped they will stimulate deeper investigation of the mutual influences of folk and art music in other works by the composer.

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Throughout this study I have stressed the differences between the original and altered versions of a melody, and the apparent conformance of a changed tune to the compositional criteria of Western art music. Yet just as striking is the fact that Bartók changed nothing that was crucial to the integrity of the original melody. Indeed, all the carols in the arrangement could still be set and sung to their former texts, for Bartók preserved the original syllabic count in each melody line. Further, it has been noted that the formal structure supported by the rhythmic and melodic changes Bartók makes is precisely the one indicated by the caesuras in the transcription (version *A*) of the tune. The changes enable this structure to be articulated more clearly than it was before—at least, that is, in the absence of a sung text. For the melodic clarification that came about as a result of Bartók's changes may well have been considered necessary to compensate somehow for the lack of a text, which formerly helped to clarify hierarchic relations and to promote both coherence and continuity among the various parts of a tune.

What this situation suggests is a deft balancing of two distinct claims which, however, are not mutually exclusive: those of Western tradition and those of the tunes. The melodies seem to have been altered only insofar as they could be made easier for Western listeners to assimilate into the repertory they had already developed ways to comprehend.

Western musical conventions became a distilling mechanism for what was essential about each melody in terms of both structure and character. Said differently, Bartók's changes in the folk tunes are comparable to those departures from the original text found in a good translation: both help make the foreign idiom available to another audience.²⁴

Earlier I stated that most of Bartók's modifications do not seem to have been selected from the melody variants, but rather resulted from the application of other criteria, specifically those of Western art music. Certainly Bartók knew what all the variants of a given tune were—these were readily available to him through his notebooks and recordings. But his desire to remain faithful to the tunes obviously did not extend to such a literal rendition of a folk performance. Rather, it appears that the composer's other criteria for change in a melody occasionally happened to coincide with certain variants; these variants themselves were not a real factor in determining what changes would be made.²⁵

The essentially variable nature of the folk tune, coupled with the composer's need to establish a precise melodic line upon which variation, embellishment and accompaniment could be distinguished may have been the initial conflict which led to the adoption of Western criteria of choice. A definitive version of each melody was created, which never existed as such before. In this narrow sense, Bartók fundamentally changed the nature of the folk tune. For the moment a tune is fixed, it becomes subject to different criteria for judging its construction—that is, it appears on the threshold of art music. And indeed, we know that Bartók always considered his work, whatever its thematic basis, as art music. This meant accepting Western conventions, at least in part. By making compositional choices from a once constantly changing line, Bartók individualized what was formerly a communal creative process. It should be clear from these observations that not only was Bartók's work influenced by folk music (as is commonly stated), but that he in turn powerfully influenced folk music. In this case, our perception of Romanian folk music is modified by the changes Bartók made in the carols, perhaps precisely so we could assimilate these products of a culture different from our own.

We now return to the question posed at the beginning of this study: why didn't Bartók indicate that he changed the tunes in the preface to

²⁴ I am grateful to Professor Leonard B. Meyer for suggesting this analogy. (Note too that the process of "translation" extends beyond the melodic line itself to the accompaniment, as Bartók substitutes the harmonic and contrapuntal resources of Western art music for the purely melodic expression of folk music.)

²⁵ And even if Bartók was simply trying to preserve the structure originally articulated by the text, the exact manner in which this was to be accomplished (that is, the specific changes in pitch, rhythm, or meter within each phrase) would still be left open and subject to other influences and criteria, including Western ones.

his arrangement, and what does this omission tell us about his attitude toward his sources? He must have realized that he would have to alter the tunes somewhat. But evidently he also believed that he had not really changed the "meaning" of the tunes, or at least what was essential about each one according to Western standards. This is not to say that the ornaments he chose to excise were unimportant, but that they are crucial only to folk performance. They become incidental in a new medium and to a new audience with different musical experience. Then too, we should remember that by harmonizing the tunes Bartók creates substitutes for the color and piquancy that ornamentation once provided. The harmonization also re-creates the kind of variety the melody would have had with a text, especially where a musical phrase is repeated. So we see that in the arrangement, even those elements most obviously missing from the original folk carol are somehow preserved. But they appear and are distributed differently within a new, wider context.

This study has tried to define in more detail than is usually provided the extent and nature of the folk influence in Bartók's composition. We have seen that his changes in the tunes, though guided by Western norms, reflect a desire to preserve the integrity of the original melodies to the greatest extent possible in the concert hall. In addition, this essay calls attention to the challenges posed by convention—specifically, the outworn conventions of German Romantic music—at the beginning of the twentieth century. The carol arrangements represent only one of Bartók's many responses in which he drew upon the rejuvenating strength of folk music. But it is important for us to realize that this new and potentially disruptive folk element was not incorporated into the composer's work without restraint. On the contrary, Bartók took great care not to destroy the syntactic framework that he had inherited. Rather, his changes in the carols may be seen as a step in reinforcing or constructing this framework anew, so as to assert the continuing vitality of the Western tradition.